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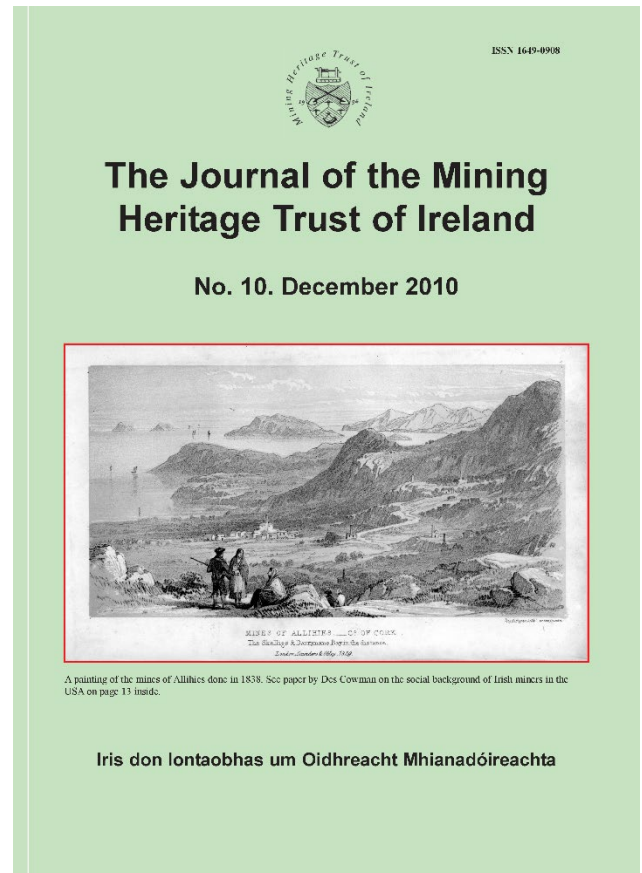
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IRISH MINERS IN THE USA: SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS

by Des Cowman

Abstract: " ---there they were, Bunmahon mines, where I spent many a day,
Now forever I must leave them for to go to Americay"

Surviving sources do not allow a comprehensive view of migration patterns or indeed of Irish mining societies. Furthermore, conditions were quite different pre-Famine to post 1850 and were changing again quite rapidly over the last few decades of the 19th century, a particular turning point being 1865 when the price of copper went into a long decline. Examples of what moulded future emigrants are given for the three long-term mining operations in Ireland (Allihies, Avoca, and Bunmahon). However, it is not to be assumed that Irish miners sought work in the mines of the USA, as will be argued in the last section. *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland*, 10, 2010 13-20.

BACKGROUND

Of the three mines in Ireland worked for two or more generations, Allihies (1812-1884) was by far the most remote and had the poorest agricultural hinterland, described in 1841 still as "very rocky, mountainous and wretchedly poor" (Williams, p.122). The dominant influence was the largely-absentee Puxley family who viewed their mines purely as a source of profit, the welfare of the workforce being mainly irrelevant. Like the other mines, expertise and direct supervision was by Cornish "captains".

Three mining companies worked the main long displaced lode at Avoca (18th century & c.1820-1880) and, while the profit motive was of course strong, they did provide for schooling, health care, and safety. Likewise at Bunmahon (18th century & c, 1825-1875) worked by the Mining Company of Ireland (MCI) which was originally set up as a philanthropic endeavour mainly by Quakers (Cowman 2001, p.49). Between 1832 and 1852 it was managed by the charismatic Cornish captain, John Petherick, who identified himself strongly with local and national causes. His departure coincided with declined Quaker influence and profits then dominated decision-making.



Figure 1. A priest blessing migrants before setting off into the unknown.

The social background of those miners is given under the following broad headings - working conditions, living conditions, education, drinking culture, social tension, and migration. The first section has an introductory paragraph about how rural peasants adapted to industrial life and a final paragraph on famine. The next section deals mainly with the fate of the miners as employment diminished. A conclusion assesses the assumptions about Irish miners' roles in US mining.

BACKGROUND TO PRE-FAMINE MINING EMIGRANTS

While it took time to mould subsistence farmers into disciplined industrial workers it did happen. In May 1820, for instance, Allihies could only be part-worked "on account of the miners remaining at home about their potato gardens". The partial famine of 1822, local ones in 1824, 1826, 1830-31, 1835, 1839 and 1840 forced change - food had to be imported and sold to the people, which of course made such unruly people dependent on management (Williams, p.58, 69-70; 84; 93 and 105). The problem here was that the barren remoteness of Allihies precluded self-sufficiency much of the time for a growing mining community.

Possibly the same did not apply to Avoca as there probably was an industrial discipline already within the mining community there (18th century mining only ceased around 1810). Also food was not an issue in Avoca; at a market day there in 1841 "all kinds of supplies, particularly food, for sale" (Cowman, 1994 p.776). Wicklow, after all, prides itself on being the garden of Ireland. While the agricultural context of the immediate Bunmahon area is a bit more ambivalent (see Cowman 1994, 27-28) the wider hinterland and reasonable infrastructure allowed ready access to all commodities. However, it was noted in 1840 that people would not turn up for work during the harvesting season and that the problem was particularly acute among children (Cowman p. 26). Besides, part of the original Quaker philanthropic ethic continued to steer the company and Captain Petherick's publicly expressed respect for the mining community (Cowman 2006, p. 10 & 55-6) seemingly eased subsistence farmers benignly into industrial discipline.



Figure 2. Emigrants from Ireland to the USA c. 1850.

Working methods in each of the mines would have been approximately the same as technology and techniques all came from Cornwall. The difference was their application, to judge from the accident rate. In 1820 Capt. Martin commented on the "many accidents" that plagued Allihies leaving men blinded (mainly from blasting) as well as crippled. The manner in which one of them died is perhaps indicative of a casual attitude towards safety by mine management who allowed the miners to take a highly dangerous short-cut to ascending, using the whim bucket (intended only for ore). Accidents there continue to be reported over the following years affecting even a mine captain there who had a lucky escape (Williams, p. 64, 68, 72). In 1832 because "of the frightful accidents" a doctor was appointed for Allihies miners "to relieve their injuries (and) save their lives" according to Puxley (Williams, p. 95). The accidents continued, however: in March 1833 a reservoir burst its banks (although sabotage is hinted at), flooded down a shaft and drowned a boy. Nobody showed any heroism according to the report. (Williams, p. 98) By 1834 there is evidence that the miners no longer fatalistically accepted accidents: after two men were buried in a fall the others refused to work in that particular location. (Williams, p. 101-2). This may have been a consequence of a structured militancy reflected in a number of strikes. Accidents continued nonetheless - e.g. 1846 "J. May fell down the shaft and was killed" (MJ 1846, p. 344).

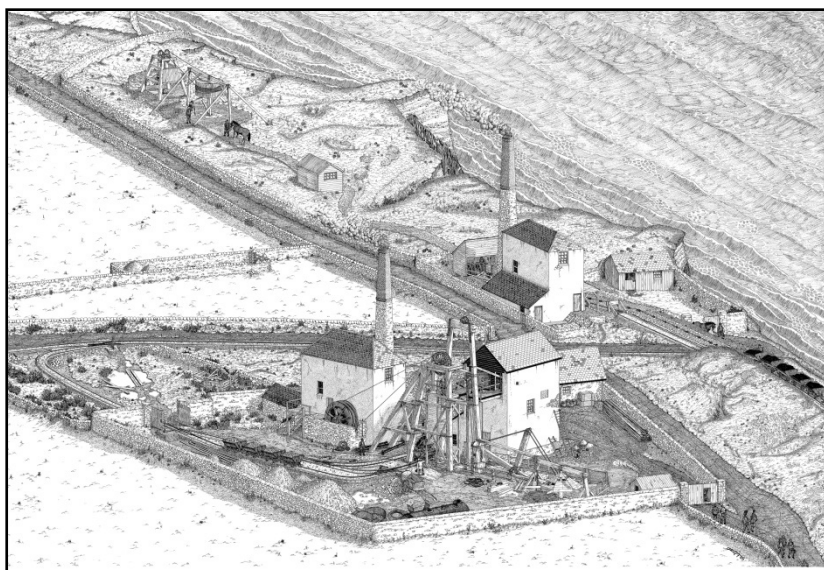


Figure 3. An artist's reconstruction of the engine-house complex at Tankardstown, Bunmahon.

On the other hand the manager of one of the mines in Avoca was proud of his safety record of one accident in ten years which he blamed on "imprudence"; the manager of another mine there also expressed concern about safety. While there were collapses there in 1835 and 1842, no one was injured (Cowman 1994, p. 777). The same probably applied to the Quaker-owned mine in Bunmahon, managed from 1832 by the very careful John Petherick (Cowman 2006, p. 33 & passim). The fact that only one accident was reported from there does not preclude the possibility of others. What happened could not have been predicted; in 1841 a sixty foot block between two levels dropped killing the two who were working on the upper level (MJ 1841, p 415).

EDUCATION

What was the educational status of those who emigrated before 1850? A visitor to Allihies in 1841 records "the people are almost entirely uneducated" and none of the children he spoke to had ever been to school. In fact the only school there was for the children of the Cornish miners (Williams, p. 122). This contrasts with Avoca at the same time where there were four schools in all, two of them provided by the mining companies (Cowman 1994, p. 778). Likewise at Bunmahon there were two schools by 1839, both encouraged by John Petherick. Controversially a third school was added in 1845, specifically for Protestant children. However, to judge by the two Bunmahon schools, the level of teaching was quite low and pupils' attendance was sporadic at best (Cowman, 2006, p. 51-4).



Figure 4. These are the better type of housing in Bunmahon as they have fenced gardens.

Housing should have been an important aspect of the lives of mining families but all the evidence from these mines was that it had low priority. Drink may have been a factor but there seems also to have been social consensus on a status-quo of squalor (by our standards). Allihies was the least congested of the mining areas but the only social building the Puxleys provided was a "village" for the Cornish workers. One visitor there in 1838 very unfavourably contrasts the Cornish houses with the Irish (Williams, p. 108) though exactly the same point was made about Bunmahon in the 1850s (Cowman 2006, p. 82). Avoca had much less space and housing there was crowded into the mining area amidst waste heaps and engine houses. Amongst the several unfavourable comments were, "wretched, dirty and filthy habitations", amidst

"squalid ruins and gigantic mechanisms". Mine manager there, Edward Barnes, stated that the reason they did not live as comfortably as their wages would have permitted was due to the miners' "want of forethought and recklessness of character" (Cowman 1994, 775-6). While the same was probably true of Bunmahon there were extenuating circumstances because the MCI had trouble buying or renting land from local landowners to build houses for their workers. They built where they could but nevertheless a shantytown grew up in waste land (e.g. among the sand dunes) with two to three families in one room. Statistically, while the population had increased almost five fold in the 20 years to 1841 the number of houses only doubled (Cowman, 2006, 37-39).

LIQUOR

The only other thing that the three mines had in common was the miners' disposition to strong liquor. A report of 1835 on Allihies stated that all the money which could have been used to improve living conditions went on alcohol. After payday there "*the neighbourhood of the mines exhibit the most disgraceful scenes of drunkenness*" (Williams, p. 105). Two totally different sources say almost exactly the same thing about Avoca c1840 with additional details about the miners fighting and the likely affect of spirits on their health (Cowman 1994, p. 775). A local priest in Bunmahon makes the same point about lack of improvement in housing due to money being spent on drink, adding that the police have to keep the pubs closed on Sundays (Cowman 2006, p. 39). The long-term effect of the Temperance movement from c. 1840 on all three cannot be estimated as the famine soon changed everything.

In Allihies outsiders were resented early on (1818) and locals "*are using their best endeavour to put them off*", denying them lodgings and food. Even the Cornish mine captains, who were the immediate creators of employment there, were subject to local harassment (Williams, p. 51). While this is not noted at the other two major mines, it did occur in the 1830s in MCI's colliery and their quarry in Tipperary (Cowman 2001). However, there as in Allihies, physical protest attracted the worst elements: "*these set of ruffians which we have daily to encounter with*" according to Captain Martin in 1820, who stole not only from the company but from each other. His and other reports over the following decade make frequent reference to theft and violence, threats of violence and the anarchic state of the surrounding countryside (Williams, p. 63; 68-9; 78-9). While in 1831 Puxley found it necessary to pretend that because of his mining employment the Allihies area "*was the very quietest part of Ireland*"; at the same time cases were proceeding against two locals for assault and theft (Williams, p. 92 & 94). The following year the miners went on strike. While there were complicating factors reported about this, the basic issue, as always, was pay. The strike was broken by laying off half the workforce who would not now be provided with food and faced starvation (Williams, p. 96-97). A second strike in 1835 was similarly broken but the police were called in for good measure (Williams, p. 105-6). However, while thefts continue to be reported through the 1830s (Williams, p. 105 & 112), the violence and threats that characterised early phases of the working seem no longer to be happening. Indeed an Allihies captain who returned to Cornwall volunteered the retrospection that he per-

sonally had found the local miners "very tractable" (Williams, p. 110) so perhaps it was mainly the Puxleys' attitudes towards them that was the problem. The only violence reported from Avoca was on payday where drunken fights broke but the temperance movement meant that this was a thing of the past from about 1840 (Cowman 1994, p. 775). Police reports from Waterford show high levels of agrarian violence but only very minor incidents among the mining community of whom John Petherick in 1848 said, "*a more well disposed, peaceful and orderly body of people is not to be found in Ireland*" (Cowman 2006, p. 58-60; 56).

In Allihies 1845-'46 was presumably seen as yet another food crisis and the usual mechanisms for importing food were put in place (Williams, p. 127) By 1847, however the scale of the problem became evident and soup kitchens were set up in January. Food prices went up but mine wages remained constant and families, faced with starvation, went where they could for food including queuing at the government "soup-kitchen". Puxley expressed his social philosophy thus: "*able-bodied men would not work while they could get stirabout in these kitchens*" (Williams, p. 128). That there was a soup-kitchen there at all would appear to be a miracle: a relief commissioner commented on "*the utter impossibility of finding parties sufficiently trustworthy --- to distribute relief*" (Famine papers). However, this must not be the full story if the census figures are to be accepted. The population drop between 1841 and 1891 for the parish was so regular that it appears almost as a straight line in Table 1a while the larger Barony lost only 10% over the famine decade with another 10% going from 1851 to 1861 before stabilising. Even more strangely, the population of Cloan actually increased during the famine decade before dropping (Table 1b) while the populations of the three other mining townlands declined only slightly with almost the same rate of decline continuing over the next 40 years. Clearly unexplained forces were at work.

Likewise, reports on the grim realities of the famine in Wicklow fail to mention any such extremes in Avoca. Within the mining townlands there the population dropped from 1725 to 1351 - a little over 20%. These were mainly from the marginal people living in the one-roomed shacks whose population dropped 265 to 67 whereas in some townlands the numbers in the better houses actually increased. (Cowman 1994, p. 776-7). Something similar happened in Bunmahon where the shantytown all but disappeared: 129 families in 90 houses in 1841 were reduced to 18 families in 14 houses ten years later. However in some townlands the population increased. There was also a strange phenomenon here of people moving into empty houses (Cowman 2006, p. 68-70). Presumably the desperate attempts made by the company to feed the people in the grimmest years of 1846-'47 saved some portion of the population.

What those Irish miners who emigrated to America pre-famine brought with them was a custom of housing squalor and the escape of alcohol. However, there was little documentation about them. One American source that is illuminative on Bunmahon has little on Allihies and nothing on Avoca (Boston Pilot). This is possibly because of the remoteness of Allihies, the journey to Cobh or Liverpool being almost as daunting as



Figure 5. Post-famine migration from an Irish town.

crossing the Atlantic. A single remark about Avoca may suggest that the focus of migration was across the Irish Sea and indeed one of the companies working there had strong links to north Wales. In 1843 a local person observed of Avoca miners "many went over to England but were disappointed and came back again" (Cowman 776??). The Bunmahon mining community had easier access to ports and therefore perhaps a vicarious familiarity with what lay across the Atlantic although the patterns are not quite what one would expect. As early as 1826 William McGrath left the area for Quebec and then moved to Ohio. In 1827 (i.e. as mine employment potential locally was expanding) Michael Hogan was in Rio de Janeiro; in 1839 he was in Boston and in Ontario in 1843. Boston may have been a recruiting ground for Bunmahon people to go to Copper County in Michigan (Mulligan 2001) and at least three of them wound up there. Many others from Bunmahon may have taken similar routes but go unrecorded: a comment of 1851 suggests that the area had been "thinned by emigration" and gives the favoured destination as Wisconsin with its lead and copper mines (Cowman 2005, p. 71-2).

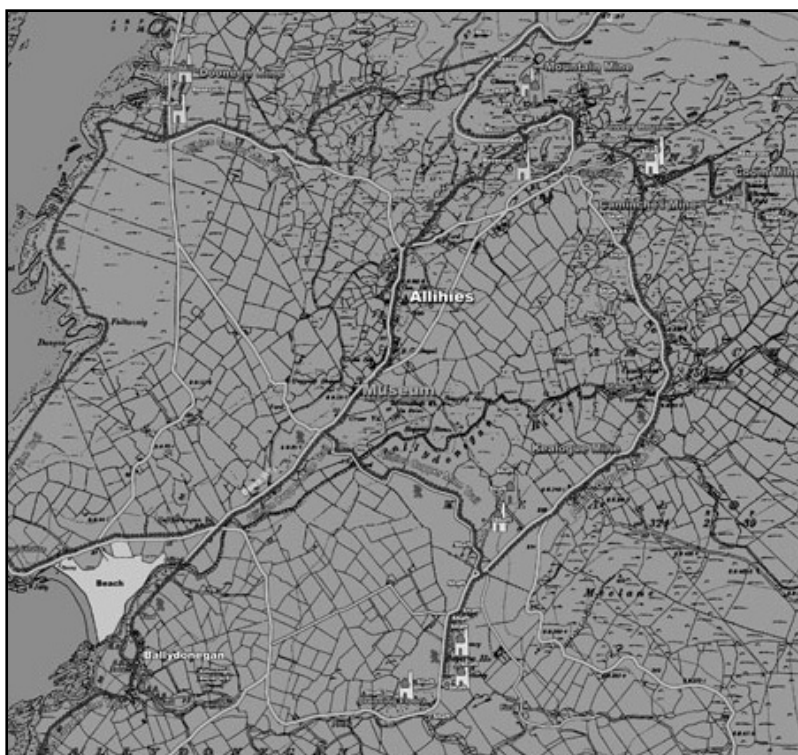
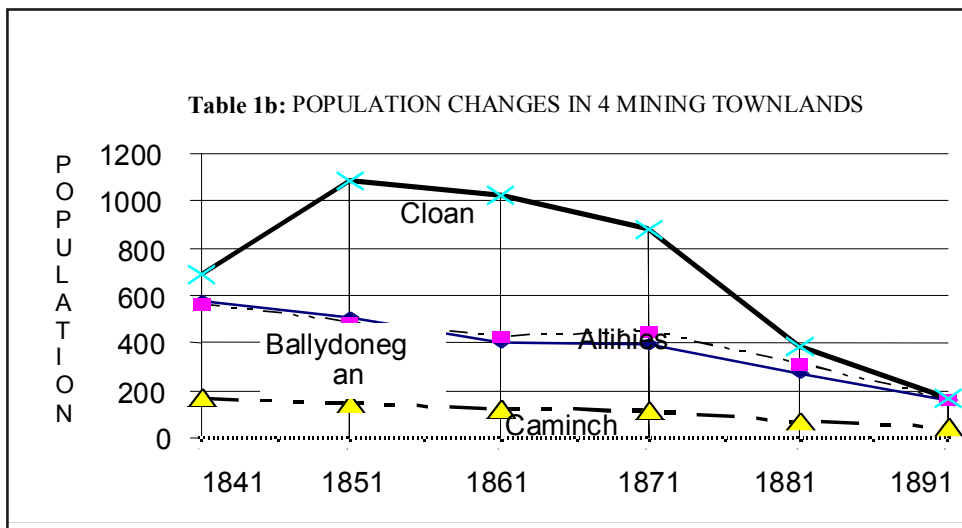
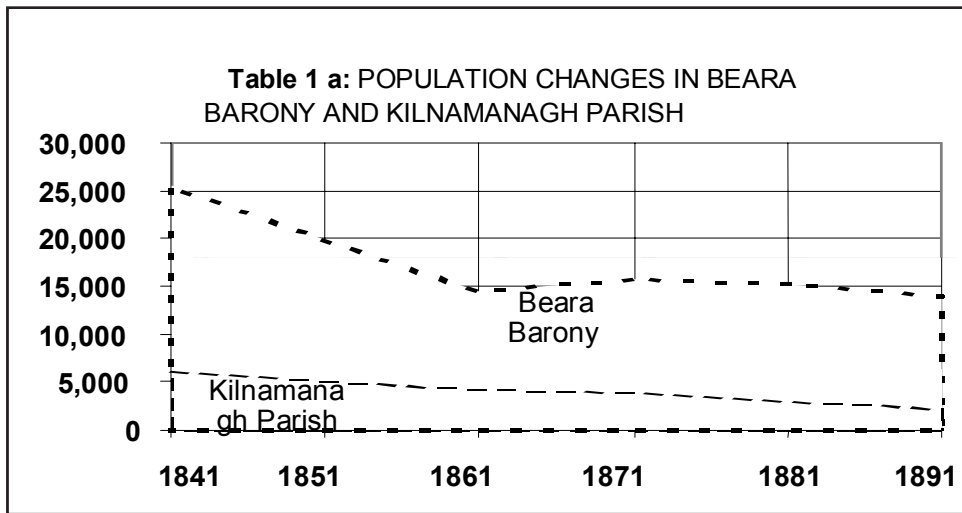


Figure 6. Allihies mining area clockwise from top left engine house icons or cluster - Duneen, Mountain, Caminch, Coom, Cloan/Allihies, Keelogue, Ballydonegan.

POST-FAMINE COMMUNITIES C.1850-C.1865

Working conditions in Allihies remained as deplorable as ever, a local priest rather exaggeratedly refers to miners being "exposed hourly to accidents" (Williams, p. 147). Management was blamed for the mining death of one man in 1853. An underground visitor in 1856 experienced at first hand the casual attitude towards safety as he ascended in the dark: unexpectedly, rungs were missing from the ladder and he regarded himself as lucky to survive. A representative of management naturally blamed the miners themselves for the accident rate: "Careless dogs, sad careless dogs are miners ---" (Williams, p. 141). However, the miners themselves refused to work one soft section after a colleague had been killed by a fall there in 1861. Two men were killed and one injured in three days in October 1865. One positive step had been taken in 1862 to make life easier in the mines with the erection of a "man-engine" eliminating the long climb at the end of a day's work although consideration for the miners was hardly the main motive (Williams, p. 137, 145-7). The absence of recorded accidents at Avoca does not necessarily mean that they didn't happen but given managements' pre-famine concern for safety, it is unlikely that they would have been more than a fraction of those at Allihies. One of the two accidents reported from Bunmahon over this period probably could not have been predicted; two miners were drowned when they worked too close to a disused flooded shaft in the mid-1850s. The death registers show one other accidental death in 1864, but not what happened. (Cowman 2006, p. 105)

According to a newspaper account in 1853, housing had not improved in Allihies: "I have not seen a more wretched, filthy, squalid and repulsive looking village since I left Cork. --- dirty and degraded." He also described leaking roofs and puddles on the floors (Williams, p. 132-3). No such report is known for this period in Avoca and while the pre-famine culture of squalor is unlikely to have altered, the congestion reported then would have been ameliorated with population drop. A visitor to the Bunmahon area in 1851 refers to the local cabins as "one room, open to the thatch, little or no window; a hole in the roof served as a chimney". However the squalid village of Bunmahon was being gradually depopulated as new houses were erected east of the river Mahon and closer to the newly created mine at Tankardstown (Cowman 2006, p. 81-2).



Unsurprisingly, educational levels remained low in Allihies with about three quarters of the population totally illiterate in 1871, almost all Roman Catholics (Census 1871, Parish Kilnamanagh). In Avoca the information is more difficult to

assess but presumably it remained much better than Allihies. There were four schools in the Bunmahon area in the 1850s, two schools on each side of the river Mahon - one girls' and one boys' on each. Another six schools offering practical training were established in the 1850s due to the evangelical zeal of the Rev. D.A. Doudney but these were too controversial, and therefore short-lived, to have made a major impact (Cowman 2006, p. 87-96). Nevertheless, by 1861 most of the mining population around Bunmahon were still illiterate despite over twenty years availability of free education. The reasons are obvious from inspectors' reports - an extremely low level of teaching with consequent low levels of attendance (Cowman 2006, p. 96-99). Possibly to address this MCI established its own school for young miners, paid them to attend and offered generous prizes for achievement. Enrolment was high but attendance low and it probably achieved little in its ten years to closure in 1871 (Cowman 2006, p. 100).

The drinking culture that existed pre-1840 probably continued post 1850 although it attracted less comment. In 1853 Puxley conceded that, despite all the best attempts to encourage the Temperance movement and stamp out drinking, it continued particularly after mass on Sundays (Williams, p. 133). Presumably, the same applied to Avoca although the only other comment comes from Bunmahon. There a somewhat tendentious observer refers to pay nights when there were drunken "scenes of dissipation". However, it may be significant that the Temperance hall, opened in 1840, did not return to that use after the famine (Cowman 2006, p. 79).

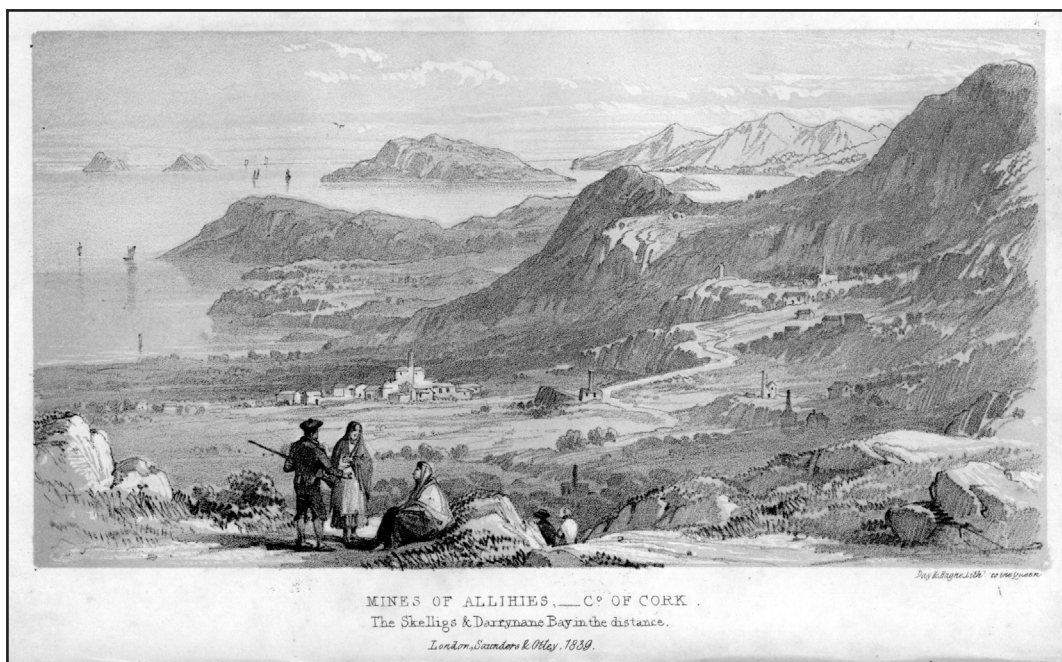


Figure 7. From a painting of Allihies done in 1838.

A section across the various mines in Avoca showing the engine houses c. 1855. Social tensions continued at Allihies with allegations in 1853 of a truck system in operation and the company making up to a three-fold mark-up on selling miners essentials such as candles, powder and fuses. Puxley denied the former but excused the latter saying that

if sold to miners at cost they would only sell them at profit around the countryside. (Williams, p. 133-4). Tensions there eventually lead to a strike in 1864 - "wanton spirit of insubordination" according to management who then found themselves surrounded by "several hundreds of idle, sullen and threatening men". Armed police broke them up and again the miners, still dependant for food on the mines, had no choice but to go back to work. They adopted a different strategy for the next strike (see below). That the problems in Allihies largely arose from the belligerence of management seems indicated when the sympathetic captain, John Reed, was effectively sacked in 1865. All the miners and families turned out to escort him part of the way "with tears streaming down their faces" (Williams, p. 148-9). There is no record of such tensions in Avoca but they had options to leave, which they did. A newly founded company there reported in 1861 on "*the great difficulty in procuring a sufficient and permanent supply of labourers*" (Cowman 1994, p. 778-9). The relative harmony which had existed at Bunmahon dissipated after the (forced?) departure of the sympathetic John Petherick and the passing of philanthropic Quaker shares to more profit-minded people. The religious tension that existed there until the departure of the Rev. Doudney in 1858 no doubt aroused passions but scarcely would have affected the working of the mine. However two years later the miners were on strike. The immediate issues are not clear but may have to do with the imposition of a truck system and changed work-practice (i.e. less money). What is clear is that the belligerence and intransigence of the directors, according to one objective observer, left "hundreds of quiet, industrious hard-working labourers" to remain out for three weeks until starvation drove those who could not leave back to work under conditions imposed by the company. Thus began increasing migration from Bunmahon (Cowman 2006, p. 110-117).

Whatever provocations Allihies miners experienced up to 1865, the remoteness of the area probably made emigration too difficult and there is no direct evidence for it. While the census figure show a continued drop in population for the Barony as whole up to 1860, the decline in both the mining parish and individual townlands was much more gradual (see Table 1 a & b). Ease of migration from Avoca probably accounts for the labour shortage there noted above. There is evidence of migration to the USA from Bunmahon through the 1850s with some winding up in the mines of Michigan (Cowman 2006, p. 73-4). This probably accelerated after the strike of 1860 although the evidence is only from 1864 when ten local men departed for the USA leaving pregnant ladies behind. Presumably such represented only a fraction of those who left and there is some evidence for this in a drop in local marriages (Cowman 2006, p. 116-7).

THE DECLINE AND DEPARTURE OF THE MINING COMMUNITIES, C.1865-C.1885

The price of copper dropped in the middle of 1865 and continued to decline with some fluctuations. Therefore the social criteria of the two sections above became less and less relevant as employment declined and demoralisation set in. In Allihies miners' wages were effectively reduced and one calculation was that after deduction the miners actually owed the company money. In 1868 they went on strike again, this time with more forethought or desperation. They closed their houses and marched the 6 miles across the hill to the workhouse in Castletownbearne "with down-cast eye and famine-stricken cheek". What percentage were allowed in immediately is not clear but there was public sympathy for their plight and they were supported by both the Catholic and Protestant clergymen. The latter said that he had visited the slave plantation of South Carolina and other impoverished places but not until Allihies "*did I witness such wretchedness and eye-revolting poverty*" commending the "*civility --- friendliness (and) natural politeness*" of the community there. He also listed six accidents over the previous twenty months and the many survivors with "wooden legs and iron arms". The priest declared "*any man who could work and remained in this country was a fool*" (Williams, p. 151-157). Nevertheless they did remain as there was only a tiny drop of population in the mining townlands between 1861 and 1871 - from 1,926 to 1,823 (Census 1881). Emigration from Allihies apparently was still not easy.

Puxley had been in Italy all the time and he came back about six weeks after the mining families had entered the workhouse, obviously anxious to get mining resumed. He offered them a better deal but he was more interested in selling the mines than in fulfilling such. That the prospective purchasers were a consortium from the more benign MCI held out hope of better treatment. However it took 18 months to complete the sale and the new owners were faced with exactly the same economic problems as Puxley and they were also in trouble in Bunmahon. By 1870 it was clear to many there that the decline was terminal and the flight was under way. Twenty left Allihies in one day reportedly alone "*for the land of liberty for want of employment in their native soil*" (Williams, p. 162). The census figures indicate something of this with decline in both the mining parish and townlands between 1871 and 1881, footnotes attributing the drop as "Due to failure of mines". While the decline continued over the following decade, inexplicably the population in the Barony as a whole remained much more stable - see Table 1 a & b.

There are unexplained anomalies about Avoca; the norm is that if employment is available with reasonable conditions and

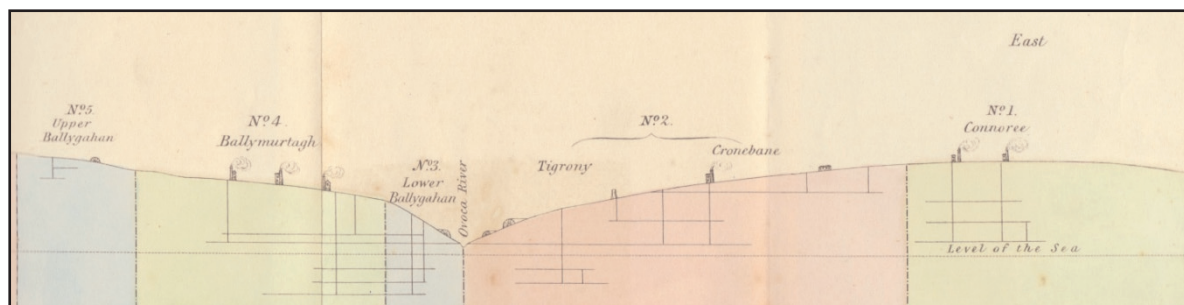
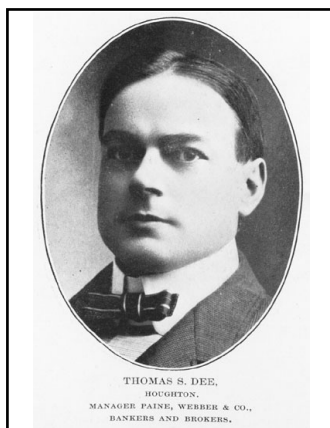


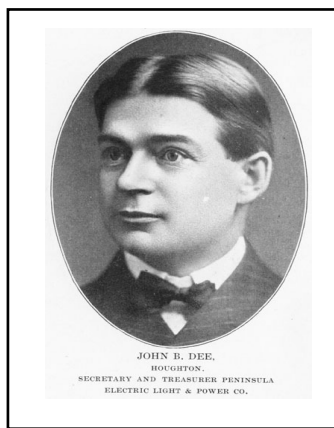
Figure 8. A section across the various mines in Avoca showing the engine houses c. 1855.



Figure 9. Post-famine drawing from a photograph, probably destined for the emigrant boat.



THOMAS S. DEE,
BOUGHTON,
MANAGER PAINE, WEBBER & CO.,
BANKERS AND BROKERS.



JOHN B. DEE,
BOUGHTON,
SECRETARY AND TREASURER PENINSULA
ELECTRIC LIGHT & POWER CO.



JAMES R. DEE,
BOUGHTON,
GENERAL MANAGER PENINSULA ELECTRIC
LIGHT & POWER CO., MANAGER
TELEPHONE CO.

Figure 10. The Dee brothers whose grand- parents came from a non-mining background near Bunmahon. The parents of the brothers went mining in Michigan and these three went successfully into business there.

security that it would be availed of. Such did not happen there. One of the mines, despite building workers' houses with plots, in 1866 still had "scarcity of labourers". This was despite the fact that one of the major mines there had closed in 1863. Another mine in Avoca laid rails within as the manager found it easier "to obtain men to push a wagon than to wheel a barrow". He found it difficult also to hire carts, get surface workers or even buy a horse. He said that labourers had gone to England but it would seem that more complex social forces were at work there (Cowman 1994, p. 779). "It was if an angel of death had swept over Bunmahon" as was reported of its closure in 1875. In 1861 there had been 1343 people in the village; twenty years later there were 320 and the haemorrhaging continued over the next decade with only 176 left - over 85% of the population gone in thirty years (Cowman 2006, p. 128). Only hints survive

as to where they went. In thirteen months from May 1873 ten children were born locally to mothers whose mining husbands had gone to America with another two absentee fathers in England (Cowman 2006, p. 134). The fates of all remain unknown.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of those who had agricultural backgrounds in Ireland did not wind up on the land in the USA. It would be understandable if the same applied to miners, particularly those who had experienced the horrors of Allihies. However, one commentator states that "*the Irish-born among Butte's thousands of Irishmen were principally drawn from the idled copper mines of West Cork ---*" that he calls Hungry Hill, the name used in a fictional description of Allihies (Emmons 1990, p. 18). A later study is more circumspect about this and while he does also assemble the family name evidence, he does not reach such a strong conclusion (O'Neill 2001). In the previous issue of this Journal Walsh (1999) shows the complex forces that were at work in attracting Irishmen to Leadville Mines in Colorado. In agreeing with the latter two, I would suggest that no assumptions can be made about the proportion of Irish miners that became miners in the US, especially those from Allihies, for the following reasons -

- Of 132 names listed in Allihies c.1850, there are 16 Harringtons (including Caupy, a sub-set), 21 Sullivans (including Soonish) but a surprising 37 Kellys, a name common through-out Ireland (Griffith's Valuation). This suggests that name evidence has to be cautiously handled as reinforced by the following points.
- The census figures as depicted in Table 1a & b suggests that there was a dribble from the Beara area and its constituent mining parts rather than any great rush. There may not be surviving sources to reconcile this with the undoubted evidence of substantial numbers from "the peninsula" (as it is known in Butte) so no assumptions can be made.
- An analogy for whether Irish miners sought work in US mines comes from Cornwall, based on those that gave their Irish county of origin (and sometimes place) and a mining occupation in the Census of 1861. There were seventeen of which twelve were from Cork about half of which had unfamiliar surnames such as Crossley and Patrick. Two came from Schull (a number of short-lived workings had operated there) and care must be taken with the common Allihies names as a Sullivan came from Cobh and a Donovan from Kinsale, both non-mining areas. Likewise, the five from other counties (two from Dublin) did not come from mining traditions. About half the Cork group went into the unfamiliar area of tin mining and some were surface labourers (Extracts from Cornish Census).
- A decade later, the census of 1871 bears out the point that migrating Irish miners did not necessarily seek work in other mines. Of the sixteen Irish, with county specified (but not place), working in Cornish mines eight were from Cork, six of them surface workers. All four born in Waterford had unfamiliar mining names suggesting that their origin was elsewhere but their parents were temporarily in Waterford when they were born. The others had also non-Irish names and came from Wicklow and Dublin.
- A sampling of the research into the genealogy of about 750

Allihies families that migrated across the Atlantic showed that only 68 had gone to Michigan or Montana mines with six to other US mines (i.e. under 10%). However, only nine of this 74 could be linked to mining at home. Sixty other ex-Allihies miners are listed but where they wound up is not recorded. While these records are too scanty for further analyses, they do seem to support the other evidence above (O'Dwyer 1988).

- Of those known to be from the Bunmahon area that went to Butte, current research indicates that the majority were not miners. This is understandable as the main wave of mining migration from there took place between 1860 and the early 1870s, more than a decade before mass employment in Butte. The agricultural recession of the early 1880s drove many from the land and at least some of these from the Bunmahon area did wind up in Butte, but the miners had already departed (Cowman 2006, p.134-139; Cullinan 2008).

- Many Irish-born who became miners in the US came from counties with no mining tradition, such as Donegal (Emmons, p. 15; O'Neill, *passim*) which, with other west of Ireland non-mining counties, provided the majority of the Molly Maguires in the coalfields of Pennsylvania (Kenny 1998, *passim*).

Therefore, on the basis of evidence currently available, it cannot be claimed that a large percentage of miners from Allihies became miners in the USA and the same is true for Bunmahon. No firm evidence has been found of where the Avoca ex-miners went. Much work still needs to be done on the Irish personnel in American mines through census records, naturalisation papers, parish records, graveyard inspections, local newspapers and any other relevant surviving documents. While this is a massive task, hopefully, the acceleration in digitising records will allow a firmer pattern to be established into the future.

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